774 is the object of constant concern during agrarian rituals. The role of the soul of plants is particularly noticeable in their medicinal uses. Drawing a remedy from a plant may cause its death, liberating its spiritual principles for the benefit of the sick man. Because of this, such an act is equated with a blood sacrifice.

With the exception of the ngovo tomato, plants have no dya. The shadow (suma) of a plant is not independent like that of a man or an animal. It exists only through light effects and its movements are caused by the air and the wind moving its leaves and branches. This is what the Bambara means when he says that the dya has a life of its own and depends on Faro, whereas the plant's suma depends on the spirit Tɛliko, master of the air.

774 787 804 843 An individual's dya can be known and his temperament and life possibilities assessed by measuring his shadow on the earth at noon. The unit employed is the little finger, which is a corporeal symbol of the person. If a pregnant woman is thus measured, the sex of the child may be predicted.

774 [579] When a boy or a girl gets married, it is said of them: a ye a dya furu: "he (or she) has married his dya." For it is impolite to say that a person married anyone but his spiritual double. Besides, the union of the couple is repeated by the union of their dya which like themselves are of opposite sex. In olden times, male twins married the [595 851] same woman and the latter's dya was taken over by Faro in the Niger. The child she conceived was the son of both husbands.

589 791 Some men do not marry. This is true of the Soma, the religious diviner attached to the major Bambara societies. Initiated in the course of a solitary sojourn in the bush, he left his dya with the invisible spirits. This is a prerequisite to the gift of double sight with which he is endowed as well as a protection against possible dangers to the dya when it remains in contact with the earth, or when it approaches other humans. The true spouse of the Soma is his dya: he may mate only with it on a fixed date when the spirits return it to him for this purpose. /61/

The tere

774 The tere was inflicted by Pemba on Mousso Koroni in order to diminish her power at the time he was pursuing her. This explains its complexity: it is at once the character of a man, his strength,

826 immortal with smooth limbs, he became mortal and hard working. As seats of the male semen, they transmit this condition to the embryo, formed in the maternal womb by Faro. The weariness felt in the limbs after the sexual act is proof of this transmission. As Locus of [859] the virile semen, framework of the man, and a mechanism suitable for physical labor, the articulations are also the symbol of society. The chief's throne, in the shape of a knee, is the image of its owner's articulated body as well as that of the armature of the social body and of the grouping of individuals under his jurisdiction (1).

1. See p. 178.

826 The limbs represent the right and the left. Rectitude, firmness, 823 and directed action are "right"; incertitude, the spirit of indecision, 201 and inconsistency in behavior are "left." The right is male and symbolizes man's labor; the other is female. All gestures, profane and religious, and all representations of objects bear witness to this. Performing his first task in the fields before the rain, the farmer gives three blows with his hoe held in his left hand in order to absorb the impurity of the earth. After this, he works until the harvest with his right hand. To cross one's hands means supplication, to put them behind one's back means humiliation.

826 Each finger has its value. The little finger, bolokoni lakare, is 201 "the son of the other fingers" and in it is concealed the entire 576 strength of the hand; it "carries the nyama of the fingers." Hence its use as a measure of divinations. To point to someone with one's little finger means to belittle him with respect to those present. Thus one casts a spell (korti) against an enemy or an undesirable person with the little finger.

826 The index finger and the thumb of a chief, formerly those of a 622 king, are marked on certain occasions with signs called bolo ti doniya, "knowledge of the signs of the hand." On the index are drawn three "acts of the world today" (bi dyẽ walew) and on the thumb, two "things of the interior of the secret world" (dyẽ gundo kono fẽw), for it is said that "the knowledge of the signs of the hand /70/ is the road of the creation 5, the index is the world in 3 and the thumb is the new world" (1). The whole represents the worlds thought out by

course within the individual who hears it, its effect on him, and the return effect on the individual reciting it are all developed according to a known mechanism.

The barama, a word which may be translated as "encouragement," "compliment," or "flattery," is a narrative, usually in poetic form, relating the origin of the name and the exploits of the ancestors (1).

1. The device, in its entirety, is generally known only to the griot, but certain parts of it, certain traditional phrases known to all, are used as a greeting to its owner.

Thus one of the elements of the Diara device bears witness to the role of their ancestors:

"Diara, Zan of Nyaola, Yayiri of Nyaola, your grandfather curved the world like a sickle, straightened it out like a straight road; grandson of God on earth, Diara!" (2)

2. Dyara, nyaola za, nyaola yayiri, i moke ye ka dye kuru i ko woloso ka foni i ko sira tike nindye; duguma ngala modè, dyara. Nyaola is a village. The name of Zan is always given to the eldest son in a family. The word dyara also means lion.

Another element exalts their courage in battle:

"Diara, Koné: if there is not a Koné among the warriors who will fight, the troop will be beaten (in advance). The lion has broken a great bone" (3).

3. Dyara, kone, kone čè kele te kele min oye fele ye; dyara ye kolo ba kari. Koné is another of the Diara's dyamu; fele describes a group of men gathered together for the hunt or for war.

The Tangara device also recalls their history and their victories:

"Descendants of Falé, Kwonda, Méné: other brave men purchased their right to sit in the village; we, brave men, won it with our bow and arrows" (4).

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4. Fale kwonda mene siw, tow bomaw ye dugu sa ka sigi, aw bemaw ya soro ni to ani kala. Falé, Kwonda, and Méné are the names of ancestors. The device is that of the Tangara of the village of Barbé.

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Moreover, the device also carries a statement of the bearer's genealogy, burudyu (1). To say this genealogy is equivalent to

1. The word si, meaning race, is used to indicate the burudyu, which is comparable to the dambe of the Peul of Mopti.

"attacking the /77/ ancestors." To speak of them, to quote them, and to tell their exploits honors them and pacifies them. In the course of the recitation "the air emitted by the speaker" is transformed by the power of the spirit, Teliko, into coolness which penetrates the ancestors (2). The same is true for supernatural powers. As soon as

2. Teliko ba sumaya se u ma. "Téliko makes coolness come to them."

the Komo chief recites Faro's burudyu, "the air coming out of the chief's mouth is transformed into good nyama which penetrates Faro's body through his pupils and ears."

To tell a man his burudyu is to honor him greatly. He thinks of his ancestors, their fortune, and their glory; he is proud to be descended from them and is incited to do as well or better than they. The effect of the "good word" described above is due to the indirect but powerful action of the ancestors (3). The recitation by a third

3. However the soul (ni) of the cited ancestors is neither called upon nor displaced by the recitation. It is the vital force, nyama, which is put into motion here.

party has the effect of maintaining the individual in his being, of making him persevere by affirming it (4), for the device appeals to

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4. This effect is already obtained by the simple repetition of the family name with which one greets a man upon meeting him. It is common to hear the Blacks greet each other by repeating their dyamu to each other several times.

its possessor's soul, ni. If, at this moment, the person flattered is in a normal state, his device causes his "soul to swell and his body to harden, inciting him to courageous action and joy." If the contrary is true, anger or emotion takes the place of contentment and calmness.

The reciter receives in return the strength of the beneficial word which, having contented the person it was addressed to, contents him also. There is an exchange of nyama: that which the reciter sends out and that which he receives in return and from which he benefits.

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That is why the recitation of the device is not always left to the individual's discretion. Because of its importance, it has become a public function generally reserved for the griot (dyeliw) who form a caste practicing endogamy and who earn their living by getting paid to recite the devices and adulations in daily life as well as during public or religious ceremonies (1). But the fact that they earn a

1. The recitation given by anyone other than the griot would be far from producing the same effect.

salary for this service affects their dignity: nobody else ever recites the devices because nobody wishes to be taken for a griot, and nobody ever marries him. The griot is at once indispensable, feared, and despised. The mechanism of forces put into motion by his action makes it possible to understand the ambivalence of feelings of which he is the object.

/78/ When the words come out of his mouth, the griot's tere is transformed into nyama, which becomes filled with a force called kuma nyamu, "nyama of words." This force goes from the head to the mouth of the speaker and reaches the person addressed. If a man is wealthy and powerful, it is said that he gets the "nyama from the mouth of those griot who flatter him." He is then forced to pay them for their encouragement. If he does not, they remain silent when

551 passing before his door and thus empty him of his nyama. The man
576 grows thin and poor. The griot may bring about his death with evil
778 words, their nyama attacking the heart, the chest, then the entire
564 body of the victim.

The griot's power over the person he flatters becomes more involved and varies according to what he is reciting. If he recites the burudyu several times, if he speaks at length of the ancestors, their nyama enters his mouth and is added to his own, thus reinforcing the power of the word. Thus, when the griot recites a barama without receiving payment, his nyama attacks the person spoken to. If this offense is repeated and if the burudyu is recited, the man is forced to pay if he does not wish to be attacked by the much more formidable nyama of the ancestors.

In these various situations, the tere of the person flattered intervenes: if it is good, it fights to defend the person, but if it is weak or wicked, it joins the ancestral forces and the person is doubly threatened.

The recitation is always made by the griot before a witness so that his action will be more binding and make the miser lose face. On the other hand, a man who pays the griot generously is looked after by the latter who sings of his generosity on all occasions and announces the sum he has received; often he does not hesitate to exaggerate the total amount received if he can hope to profit by doing so (1).

[789] 1. If the griot knows that the wealthy man he is addressing is miserly, he rubs his teeth with roots which he knows has the power to make his words even more effective.

[554] Sometimes a man reaches a secret agreement with the griot in order to gain prestige. He publicly gives him a considerable sum, part of which the griot returns the following day as agreed upon. The gift is so generous that none can surpass it.

[585 561] This practice is particularly apparent at the time of marriage. The men of the same age grade as the groom outdo each other in their gifts to the griot. The one who has given most passes for the most generous. Sometimes the griot invents a new barama on the spot even though he does not know the device.

551 The device is recited on numerous occasions. After a birth, the
576 griot proclaim it in the course of the name-giving ceremony, address-
778 ing themselves to the father, then to the newborn child /79/ who thus
564 receives it for the first time. At a marriage the barama of the two partners are alternatly recited. In everyday life, the recitation is carried on most frequently during religious ceremonies or feasts. In the hunt or at war, it has the effect of helping the participants and increasing their courage (1). In a meeting it is used to greet people

[127] 1. If the griot recites it to a war chief and the town under attack is taken, he receives part of the loot.

bearing the same name, and if one of the assistants is to be particularly honored, the first words of his device are recited.

551 In case of illness, the ally (senãnku) (2) comes to the patient's
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2. See p. 119.

side and recites his barama to encourage him and help him get well. If he is dying, the recitation, which is then the equivalent of a prayer, may help his soul return. After death, the ally, the griot, and the [764] blacksmiths come near the corpse to recite his barama in order to honor him.

551 The devices pertaining to the various crafts are used when address-
576 ing the artisan with whom one has business. Thus the blacksmith to
539 whom one brings work is greeted first by his name to which is then added:

"ini fara ani goni, you are with stone and fire."

A person crossing a field will say to the farmer bent over the earth: "i ni tye i ba ka kusebe daba, greeting to him who handles the hoe well," or simply: "i ni tye daba la, greeting to him who is with the hoe." To the shoemaker one would say: "bana ani ba golo, (you are) with the acacia (3) and the goat leather."

[386] 3. This refers to the bana or boina (Acacia arabica) used by the shoemaker to make a black dye.

551 The institution of the device, with all its elaborations, has the
576 effect of confirming people in their bodies, their spiritual principles, and their social functions. Except for the cases of emigration mentioned above, the occasions are rare indeed when an individual is obliged to change his name or device during his life. A woman keeps her father's barama even after marriage.

551 An illegitimate child receives neither the name nor the device of
848 his family. They may be given him later if the father makes himself
564 known. A Bambara who contracts a misalliance, for example, by
783 marrying the daughter of a blacksmith or a griot, will bring into the world impure children who will never have a right to their father's barama (1).

1. Such a child is said to be a sofali (literally, horse donkey), that is, a bastard.

552 We must add that the prerogative of having a device is not limited
782 to humans. All animate beings, many /80/ inanimate ones, the elements of nature, places, villages, plants, animals, and all the supernatural powers have theirs which men address during prayers.

The Taboo

784 One or several eating taboos, tne or tana, are attached to the
[551] family name and are observed by all who bear the name. According to certain initiates, the taboos were decreed by Faro when he determined the food proper to each species (2) after having classified the

2. See p. 52.

beings of creation. For the common man, the origin of the taboo is always the subject of a tale or legend and justifies the bonds between an ancestor of the family and the animal or plant designated. Most frequently, the animal has helped the man, has saved his life, or the other way around; or else, following some serious events, the ancestor was transformed into an animal or plant. Numerous versions of the origins of such bonds are given.

764 The corpse is the object of particular care. In the case of a blacksmith or a Soma, two stalks of millet are placed for a few moments on either side "for the nostalgia of the body" (1). This custom indicates

1. Fari nana fi, literally, "body of the black face."

that the soul, temporarily in the Komo altar, and the exuvia which will later replace it, feel sad for the animate body that will become the prey of the termites. These stalks symbolize the two ancestors who accompanied Koumabana into the great beyond, the death in this case repeating in some way the story of the appearance of death on the world (2).

2. See pp. 45, 46.

The combination of the body and the two symbols adds up to the number three, the male number, and recalls the three taps given to the newborn of male sex at his birth. A few moments later a kinsman places the stalks on each side of the door to the dead man's house. The mourners who come to convey their condolences crouch before [576] them, putting cowrie shells at their feet in the greatest silence, for "to talk and to cry increases the sins of the dead man, and tears increase his burden."

764 If the deceased is an important personage, especially if he is chief
554 of the village or head of a family, the signs of the actual world and the future world (bolo ti doniya, Fig. 1) are sometimes drawn upon his index finger and thumb. The senãnku, the blacksmiths, and the griot come to recite his device (barama) and receive in thanks the clothes which belonged to him.

764 The eldest son of the Komo chief, who is first advised of the death, brings the news to his father who asks him to announce it to the men of his age grade. Each of the subsequent age grade is notified by a delegate from the preceding one. Finally, the young circumcised men, recently admitted to the society, go to tell the women and the uncircumcised the hour when the mask is to come out. However, only the funeral of an elder, a village or district chief, obligates all the members to move about.

787 to know the sex of the child a woman is carrying and the character
826 which will be attributed to him by the spirit.
[843] Without further elaboration on this method of divination which implies a series of interpretations, it suffices to note that it is integrated into the system of Bambara thought and inspired by the conception he has of man's place in the universe.

Divination by the Kola Nut

787 The kola nuts which the Bambara eat and use in their sacrificial or divinatory rituals are classified into seven categories according to their form and color.

1. dangoro, red nut.
2. yeleworo, white nut.
3. sosokuworo (literally, mosquito head), a red nut pointed at one of its extremities.

/217/ 4. flaniworo (literally, twin kola), a white nut with the same signs on both its halves.

5. worodanda (literally, kola without a mouth), a nut of two colors without an apparent crack permitting it to be divided.
6. bassiworo, a dark red and very bitter nut.
7. nyeworo, a nut of light and indeterminate color.

The kola nut, "created for Faro's twin girls," is itself a symbol of duality, for both its adhering halves are easily separated. In daily life, unless the diviner has ordered it as a purification, a kola nut is not eaten by one person alone; it is divided and one of the halves given to a third person. This gesture of politeness and friendship is also the expression of the duality of man, comparable to that of the fruit itself.

[576] To give kola nuts is always a sign of deference, respect, or affection. To eat a white nut "chases away sorrow and worry." The nut without a crack is rarely eaten. As it appears to be of one piece, it has an inauspicious character. In religious ceremonies the bassiworo nuts are preferred for the boli; the ordinary red nuts, dangoro, for the other altars. The pointed nut, sosokuworo, is offered by one who wants a child. The officiator chews half the nut and spits it onto the altar before eating the other half.

*173 interview with his father, asked them to help him build a house where he could live independently. They set to work, and Mamari's house was soon built at Ségou-koro on the site of the future Biton-blon-da, the place where the ton' had been meeting up to that time. On Mondays and Thursdays, after a hunt to provide game, the members met there and had a feast. Each brought some sort of utensil and they prepared their own meals.

An old slave belonging to fa Siné, named bina (1) Bilali,

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1. Bina, whose literal meaning is "uncle," is here used as a title of respect.

had been attracted by the fine food and asked to be taken in as a "slave of the ton' " (ton-dyon'). He was admitted on that basis and became a sort of general factotum. A Soninké slave followed his example and was likewise admitted and given the important role of trumpeter. Using a horn which he sounded three times, he called together the members of the ton' when ordered to do so by Mamari. He was called ton-masa, "master of the ton'," because his summons was not to be disobeyed on pain of [32] a fine of ten jugs of millet beer for recalcitrants.

A Somono slave named Allah-doungo (lit., Allah's pleasure) also offered his services to the ton', and the organization increasingly became the refuge of men seeking to evade any authority they deemed excessive.

These recruits were the first ton-dyon'; all were slaves in quest of freedom. Soon, however, the movement they had started was extended, thanks to the influence of the ton-tigi's diplomacy.

One day Mamari's mother gave (1) a free gift of twenty

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1. It is entirely typical of native custom to give ostensibly free gifts in this way, when it is actually intended that the giver receive more than he gives. This is an example.

jugs of beer to the ton', and Mamari used the occasion to tell the

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exogamy, saying: "No one shall marry one of my daughters unless he is an inhabitant of the town." Then he charged his children never to take spouses from the Massa-si clan (Traditions historiques et légendaires, Delafosse, p. 53).

Béni Fali-Sékolo (1690-1700). Since Massa was by now a very old man, he abandoned active authority to his son, Béni Fali, called Sékoro, who was as strong and brave as his father. He continued his father's practice of armed pillage, assisted by his many brothers, the best-known of whom included: Gran, called Foro-koro; Séba, called Mana; Tyema, the son of Nyanilé; Bo, son of Déni-ba; Massa, called [109] Bakari; Séri-ba and Allahi, who were twins; and Mo-siré-bilé.

Gran, called Foro-koro (1700-1709). Some say that intrigues by the Soninké and the people of Niamala were what persuaded the fama of Ségou, Mamari called Biton Kouloubali, to attack the Massa-si. After a siege that lasted for three years, Sounsan-na had to surrender. Foro-koro was taken prisoner and sent to Ségou, where he was put to death. His skull (1) was kept

1. Mamari made it into a box for his amulets and it was the basis of his magic.

as a talisman by Biton.

Others, more explicit, tell how and why the attack was carried out against Sounsan-na. Mamari called Biton Kouloubali had given his daughter ba (2) Sana in marriage to Sana-ba

[554 576]

2. The word ba, which literally means "mother," is here used as a title of respect.

Mamari (3) Kouloubali of Mourdia. When the wedding party that

3. Sana-ba Mamari means "Mamari, son of the woman named Sana-ba."

881 302 On the same day the young girls in certain localities have a characteristic ceremony. One of them whitens her face, breast, and back with a mixture of milk and ashes. Thus daubed, she dashes out of the village brandishing the spatula (to-n-galama) which is used to stir mush (to) in the pot; her companions follow her, shouting. The band goes around the village four times in this fashion, each time stopping at the crossroads. At these points the girl who is bedaubed throws handfuls of food (1), provided by her companions, to the spirits,

[262]

1. Usually basi (couscous) made with fish.

crying: "Dege dule (2)." Her companions reply: "Naloma (3)."

2. Literally, "thick mush."

3. That is, "fool."

881 527 [273] [576] The eve of the soli (soli-si). During the evening preceding the soli, the families concerned enjoy an ample meal, accompanied by innumerable jugs of beer (dlo) as is the custom at all festivals among the Bambara. This is a time of special merriment, of shining faces and greasy hands, and it is good form for the men and boys to belch noisily, saying repeatedly: "ne ne fa," literally, "I am full," that is, "I am replete." The [301] women wander about the lanes, wrapped in their best skirts, with balls of amber in their hair and small silver or even gold rings in their ears and nostrils and rather heavy bracelets on their [482] arms and ankles. Some carry jars of dlo on their heads, while others carry gourds full of couscous, dege, or hot sauces which are often nauseous with smoked or spoiled fish. After the meal everyone gathers on the public square, forming a wide circle whose center is reserved for the dancers; piles of dried millet [373] stalks are used to make bright fires which illuminate the scene and warm the audience.

881 302 The "boys of the soli" (soli-ma-tye-u), their heads

844 Before delivery of her child, a woman is advised to pound grain. When the labor pains come, the woman retires to her hut with several matrons (men are not allowed access). If the child is poorly presented, the priest is called. He performs outside the hut, simulating the delivery and chanting the formulas that ease labor. To deliver the infant, the wor .n kneels with her hands thrown behind her, while the midwife supports the small of her back. At birth the infant's shoulders must touch the ground; this is the moment when he receives his spiritual principles. The infant is washed several times and smeared with karite butter.

846 853 854 The mother must not go out during the first eight days after the birth; she must devote herself entirely to the new-born. She massages his head daily in order to give it a more rounded form, and she pinches his nose. She nurses the infant for the first two years, then the weaned child passes directly to the communal calabash. Until the child can walk, the mother carries it astraddle on her back with the aid of a loincloth knotted at her chest. In this manner the infant accompanies the mother everywhere, to work as well as to the dance. 868 It is during these intimate contacts that the mother teaches her child to talk. Later, the little girls stay with their mothers who teach them all the domestic arts, while the boys are educated in outside work. [867] During their childhook they are taught the usages and rules of deport- 201 ment: a woman knows she must never shake the hand of a man to greet him, and, if he extends his hand, she flings up her arm "as a 576 sign of not being interested." A man will salute his superior by extending his hand palm upwards, and the superior will put his over it; inversely, when a man greets an inferior he extends his hand with the palm down, while for an equal his hand will be perpendicular to the ground. If a man must ask someone's pardon, he puts his hands behind his back to simulate the tail of an animal (for he has acted like an animal). Crossing the hands in front of or upon the head is a sign of sadness. To mark his submission to a king, a man puts his right elbow to the ground. To pray to God, the two hands are extended with the palms turned [89] outward. A woman learns that it is im- 576 pudent to question her husband during the day, and when she speaks 593 of him, she says koke, that is, big brother, for she cannot pronounce 833 his name or in any way recall the bonds which exist between them. It is only during the two consecutive nights that she couples with him

576 that she may speak to him freely. When the day of union comes, the
593 wife herself prepares her husband's food; then she lies on the left side
833 (the feminine side) and her husband on the right side, and she cannot
[842] be impregnated except by a union twice repeated.

771 These corporal techniques[1] are dictated and ordered by the religious imperatives which pervade the life of the Bambara from before his birth until after his death.

761 What we have said of the Bambara's religion and of his conception of the world enables us to understand that there cannot be for him a complete break between life and death: birth is a reincarnation; death is not destruction. This is why a man's life does not present one substantial unity but is divided into a certain number of distinct periods, each of which is inaugurated by a rite of transition that marks the death of an anterior state and the rebirth to a new life.

a. Before Birth

843 From the first month after his conception, the infant consti-
761 tutes a person who receives a series of spiritual forces emanating
from his father's side of the family and especially from the recently
858 deceased ancestor whose name he will receive. At the same time, he inherits all of the paternal taboos, which the mother must respect during her pregnancy. It is only after his birth, at the time he receives his name, that the infant receives the spiritual forces coming from his mother's side. These forces are transmitted through the medium of the priest and the ancestors of the priest.

761 From then on, the infant is required to observe all the taboos
of the beings who have had a part in the composition of his personality;
858 he thus finds himself tightly bound to the society in which he will live.

b. Birth Rites

852 At birth the baby is washed with millet beer (1) (to purify him)

1. For all these rites, see G. Dieterlen, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion].

[1] [i.e., sexual reproduction and childrearing, see pp. 117-119. -Analyst]

physical male factor residing in the clitoris. The operation takes place, moreover, during the same period as the circumcision. It is carried out by the potteress, wife of the blacksmith, in full daylight before the assembled kin. During their seclusion the girls wear a white veil which plays the same role as the bonnet of the circumcised. Instead of the sistrum, the girls shake a gourd which contains eight millet seeds and cotton fibers which their fiancés have given them. A goat is sacrificed for the ceremony. The collected blood is given to the fiancé in honor of his ancestors who become those of the girl.

[93] On the last day of the ceremony the girls definitively rid themselves of their wanzo by jumping over a pyre composed of the clothes and scraps of the excisèd.

e. Marriage

It is only after having been circumcised or excised that young people may marry. The institution of marriage is regulated by a ritual which has often been described, particularly by Amar, Monteil, Tauxier, Aubert ...

The marriage arrangements are made by the respective fa of the two betrothed, after the young people have been consulted. The request is officially made to the parents by an intermediary, a man of caste or a sènanku. It is accompanied by ritual gifts offered to the fa of the girl. In the Bougouni region the request is accompanied by ten kola nuts, because ten is a complete number that designates good events and future births. (Nine kola nuts are offered to present condolences, four as a sign of greeting. To send three nuts would be insulting, and 19 nuts, marking incompleteness, would be a sign of lack of confidence.) The first kola nuts to be offered are always wrapped in one or two karite leaves, symbol of life and of fecundity. If the ten kola nuts are accepted, it means that the father has opened the way to the marriage. The intermediary then make a second trip the following week, bringing a cock for sacrifice to the ancestors and ten more kola nuts; during a third trip he offers another cock and ten more kola nuts before the entire assembled family of the young girl, witnessing that the girl may meet her fiancé. In the course of the fourth trip, the intermediary leads the girl to the fiancé's family, where she will be confided to the wife of the head of the family who will undertake her education.

784 One might perhaps think that it would be very difficult not to
602 see one's tné....? In the Sudan good manners require that people
576 discipline their glances from their earliest years. A son-in-law lowers his eyes in the presence of his mother-in-law, a daughter-in-law turns her back at a three-quarters angle out of modesty in the presence of her father-in-law, and when a lover goes to win over the father of his fiancée, she runs away and hides. Any Negro, however poor his manners, will direct his look no one knows where, into space or upon his toes, every time he greets anyone and hears his news, and will chat with a person for a quarter hour without ever looking at him. No more is asked for the tné. Undoubtedly a Bambara shields himself with both hands in its presence... and he plays the young daughter-in-law; he knows well how to differentiate between seeing and looking, and he knows how to tell you at the time, however little he is accused: "Né y'a yé tigné, n'ka, nè gné tount'a la, né m'a flè. I saw it certainly, but I did not leave my eyes on it, I did not look at it."

3. The Gnâma

789 The tné are rendered sacred, above all, by the curse of the
778 ancestor. Nothing is so much feared by the Bambara. To be cursed,
626 and cursed by his father, is the greatest evil that can befall a man; his wives would run away from him, his children would blush to call him "father," his /27/ friends would abandon him, the people of the village would be terrified to speak to him; he would have to flee. And where would he go? The gnâma of his father, of his ancestor, of his fetish's tné, would cling to his steps and follow him everywhere. Only suffering would be left for him; sickness, hunger, poverty, and humiliation would be his lot and, rejected by humanity, he would die in despair.

789 The word gnâma is very difficult to translate. Does its equivalent
778 exist in our French language? Gnâma is a force, a power, or also perhaps a /kind of/ energy, a fluid possessed by every man, every animal, every living being; it never disappears and continues to exist even

3. The Reincarnation of Souls

775 769 It is a great surprise that the Bambara believe in the reincarnation of souls. Some do not dare to believe in it because they sacrifice to the shades of their ancestors, and others, "cultivated minds, nourished by the sanest philosophy," reject this belief as illogical, since the religion of the Negro is the worship of the dead! They do, in fact, worship the dead, but in the Bambara religion this worship, extensive as it is, remains a detail, and not the foundation. To honor the shades of his ancestors (but only of those who were heads of families, so that the worship of the dead is already somewhat limited -- with all due respect to those who see nothing but it), the Bambara family head throws a big blot of chicken blood and a mouthful of chewed kola nut onto the dége, or millet flour mixed with water, and pours it onto the wall at the entrance of his hut. He does so to implore the help and protection of that power or authority which his predecessors possessed in their position as family head, an authority exactly the same as that which he himself possesses. He believes, nonetheless, in the reincarnation of souls! This belief is general and universal among fetishists, and if some do not dare admit it before Europeans and [576] Moslems, their reticence is due to simple human respect, to a fear of contradicting beliefs which they know to be contrary to their own, a wish not to offend anyone and not to be the butt of laughter and ridicule.

766 775 Infants who die at the breast before having achieved the use of reason are buried in a corner of the inner courtyard and sometimes even in the hut where they were born. Before such a child is buried, one of its limbs, usually the big toe of the right foot, is broken, and sometimes the father marks it with a knife on /57/ the shoulder, the arm, or the chest. He thinks that the child who will come after it will be animated by the soul of the dead one, and he neglects nothing that might possibly enable him to ascertain whether it is. This stupid and ridiculous operation is commonly performed under the eyes of the mother, and some strange events occur. Since she must submit 775 to the will of her husband as soon as possible and have marital relations 826 with him, she soon conceives. During her pregnancy her imagination

775 walking in the direction of Kita. They stopped in a village near this city and were lodged by a Malinke (2). On entering the courtyard,

2. A Mandingo tribe whose group "taboo" is the Mali or Mani, the hippopotamus.

they stopped dumfounded, for they found sitting on a mat an elderly man whose features were familiar to them, -- wasn't he the old man of Fobougou? It was he, for he greeted them and asked them news of the old men of the village and of the members of his family. After supper they returned to the courtyard, wanting to sit near their old man, whom they had found again so far from his native land, but he was no longer there, and their host told them that he had fled, refusing to tell what direction he was taking.... "That was our old man," say the people of Fobougou with great conviction, for they believe in this as in the capture of Ségou. "Our young people saw him, talked with him, and some had known him before his death. Without doubt," they add, "he must have suffered in his family while he was alive, so he did not dare come back to life in our midst." This story, which I heard in Fobougou itself, is told more or less everywhere with a few variations; in September, 1908, between Ségou and Koulikoro on the Niger, one of the laptot (3) told it to his colleagues as they squatted

[505] 3. Negroes who serve as sailors on the river are called laptot.

around him in a circle.

775 531 576 In Ouentja, a village an hour and a half or two hours at the most from the Bani, on the road between Ségou and Koutiala, the people have such great respect for one of their deceased former chiefs, the old sagi, that they avoid saying his name. They have even changed or rather abbreviated one of their greetings, and while almost everywhere else strangers are greeted with the words: "i dangha sagi," here they say to you only: "i danghana (4)." According to the /60/

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4. I dangha sagi, "may you be blessed on your arrival, on your return into our midst." -- (Your return to us is a blessing.) -- The Negroes abbreviate, saying, i dana sagi; it is only old men and those who pride themselves on speaking their language well, who articulate clearly and say i dangha sagi.

legend, this sagi whose name one avoids taking in vain, was chief of the village and influential in its environs. He died very old, took on flesh again in the womb of a woman of the family, and recommenced the cycle of his existence. He again became village chief, and again died in extreme old age, and returned to the flesh again a third time. As always he was chief, passed from life to death in extreme old age, was honored and respected by everyone, and received funeral honors such as have never been awarded to any Negro prince.

775 At the time of death the soul goes into Lahara, a vague word, so vague that a Bambara cannot define it or give you any idea of it. It is the place where the invisible beings live and where everything becomes invisible. Children and those who have not completely fulfilled the cycle of their existence, only pass through and hasten to return to the wombs of their mothers, or at least to those of women of their families.

775 769 A secret force urges old men to return to the flesh again in their own family, but sometimes they refuse and seek limbs elsewhere. They spend a longer time in Lahara and, doubtless matured by experience, they are not always in a hurry to reappear. Many remain there for a number of years, awaiting a favorable moment, and this uncertainty hovering over the fate of the old men, may be a reason for sacrifices to the dead. One definite fact is that these sacrifices are directed only to the dead who have had authority in the country, the village, or the family, and the honors rendered them seem to be

775 directed more to the authority which they had in their lifetimes than
769 to the persons themselves.

775 A good number of Bambara believe in hell and assert that the souls of the wicked are condemned by God to eternal torment. It is clear that they are changed into demons and do not come back to life, but it is so difficult to deserve hell that not one Bambara goes there, and they live without any fear, just as if it did not exist. This belief in hell perhaps indicates an exception to my statement on the reincarnation of souls but does not destroy its validity, and it can be stated that the majority of Negroes believe in such a reincarnation. /61/

Chapter 4

Bambara Ideas concerning God, Invisible Beings, and Adam and Eve

1. Belief in God

776 The Bambara believe in the existence of a Supreme Being who is Creator and Master of all things; they believe in God, in a recompensing God who can punish and reward. Their most polished formulas are those in which they testify to their belief in Him, and His name is on their lips at every moment without any special reason.

776 To a young married couple, a Bambara hastens to say: "May
516 your union be happy, may God give you peace and many children," and when a family is in sorrow, for instance because they have lost one of the members, it is in God that they seek consolation and in invoking Him that they give comfort: "May God have pity on him and grant him a happy sojourn in Lahara," "may He not separate him from good people and may He add to your days those of which he has been deprived." (1)

776 1. These last phrases have been taken
775 by some as a reason to doubt that the

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Bambara believe in the reincarnation of souls. But the Negroes say that a soul separated from the body lacks something, it is not complete. Since a soul stays in Lahara for a fairly long time, until it finds the opportunity to be reincarnated and decides to do so, the wish is expressed that during this period that it may live with the souls of good people and not suffer too much from the loss of its body -- and nothing more. These comforting expressions are heard at every death, whether of a child, a man, or an old man.

776 842 The sterility of a woman is obviously not natural; it is attributed to fetishes, to the evil spells of a malicious person, and quite often /62/ also to God. "Alla b'a kégné dén-na --, God is placing an obstacle to /against/ her having children." As the Bambara gives small gifts of honey, cotton, butter, sugar, or cowrie shells to a woman who has just given birth, they say, "May God soothe your back (your pains); may He preserve your child." Upon receiving the slightest favor, the recipient commends the one who performed it to the protection of the Almighty, and the wishes at festivals and drinking bouts are an endless litany a large part of which refers to God.

776 The Bambara speak the name of God apropos of a trifle and always -- except in certain sacrifices to the boli fetishes where they use it blasphemously -- with some respect. I confess that (if I did not know through being somewhat acquainted with them that in their mouths this name is a word and no more, a commonplace into which enters neither affection nor love) it would sometimes seem that they have deep and tender feelings of piety. In fact there is nothing more touching than to hear a pagan Negro, a Bambara, answer whoever asks after his health: "Nébi Alla tanoun, I praise God, I glorify God."

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177 avoided the stroke of the sword or slavery, kept their faith in fetishes
181 intact, and shielded both themselves and their /68/ children from all religious propaganda -- for what was there to teach them, what could they be taught that they did not know already?

177 The terms from the Koran have become familiar to them in
192 present-day language. Since they do not come from them and express primarily a concept rather than the thing itself, they have been able to use them with complete freedom, without failing in the respect due to the superior beings, their lords and gods, whose names are never spoken in vain or in an unsuitable name. Nowadays the words have become so Bambara that the people do not even suspect that they are foreign to their language, and have no cause to be surprised at them. The Bambara make anything their own that they feel translates their thought precisely, without giving much attention to the original meaning of the word, which they often do not know. Having
●[576] heard the Moslem repeatedly cry out bismilahi, they thought it in good taste to make this exclamation in the anecdotes and stories that they tell, and for two or three years this has been the super-polite expression in "smart" society for inviting a guest to enter a hut and squat on the mat. In twenty years this word bismilahi بسم الله will have no other meaning! Even though it means "in the name of God," you would be laughed at if you were heard to say that it is an Arabic word with quite another meaning, just as you would waste your time telling a Negro that the expression "fou moi le camp" /"get out of here," literally "give me the camp."/ is plain /French/ slang. When a slave escapes, does one not say, "a bi fou moi (1) le camp?"

1. a: "he," bi: "is," fou moi le camp; the whole expression: "to desert."

It is a widely used expression known by everyone and is teamed with this other: ze ma fo, about which I pondered for several days, seeking to find its meaning. Yet nothing could be simpler; it is "I don't give a rap." /From the French je m'en fous/.

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in this respect they are far superior to any of the Arabs of Algeria, for example. Family life is more open and cordial among them.

children do not speak the name of their father, especially if he is a gouatigi, or family head, and when a swarm of children are enjoying themselves around their old daddy, only one word is on all the little lips to awaken his attention, avoid his reprimand, call for his caress, and bring forth his smile: Koké-yo -- koké-wé! (2)

2. I use the word Koké-yo -- (Né koké) koké we (koké, "I beg you, Koké") -- because it is the most common; there are obviously other similar terms. Favorite wives also like to call their husbands by this name. For everyone it is a term of respect and at the same time it is tender, affectionate, and coaxing.

[888] 576 551 Old men are given borrowed names, bougna toua, out of respect and veneration, and the reason for this practice is to avoid having to speak their names in vain and unsuitably. The practice is current, and it is even carried to an extreme, for although a child is given a respect name within his family, he is never called by that name. How many people there are whose real name is not known except by close relatives and friends! All the Dougoutigi, To-n-tigi, Ba-koroba, and [553] Moké-touama received a name on the eighth day after their birth, and the names used to designate them are borrowed names. /80/

888 793 576 551 In the environs of Ségou, where Islam is widespread and spreads farther every day, the sacrificers to the protecting genii of the villages, the gnéna-n-sonna ba, or dougoutigi, have lost some of their prestige, but anyone who respects them, even if he be a Moslem, never speaks their names. At the present time in Bani country, where the old customs and traditions are preserved with jealous care, there is not a

888 793 576 551 child, woman, or young man that can tell you the name of the great sacrificer of the village if the latter is in the least old. Out of respect and veneration his name is never spoken; he is the head, and if they are questioned all will answer: "Toua si t'a la dougoutigi ko, he has no other name than that of dougoutigi, head of the village." And, in fact, most of the people know no other name for him.

551 576 779 This need to avoid speaking the name of whosoever is respected, venerated, or feared goes so far as to bring about the abbreviation of phrases customarily used in salutations (1), so it can easily be imagined

1. See what I said in this connection in the preceding chapter, /section on/ "Reincarnation of Souls," pertaining to Ouentja.

that the name of the fetishes is not known except by their masters and their initiates. Of course, a Moslem, a woman, an uncircumcised man, or an unexcised woman can tell you the number of the gnéna and gnâ owned by the village, and they also know whether the gnéna (djiné) include a Dasiri, Ngolo, Koté, Ntomo, Tauri, etc., and whether the gnâ (boli, sétané) include a Komo, Nia, Douga, Kono, Nama, Bala, etc. But except for the initiates, who could tell you that a certain boli is called Séré, Magné, Toroba, Dono, or Nono, or that the Magna is also called Tjarofign and the Nama, Sirima-n-fign? Only the generic name is known, and it is in good taste not to pronounce even that when extending an invitation to a festival in its honor. The Nama is enclosed in a beehive in the shade of a tamarind tree, which in turn are enclosed in coarse mats, and when an invitation is given to the sacrifice, the most stylish formula is: "Come and see us, an bi djasé (2) son, we are sacrificing to the /81/ palisade." The trumpet

2. Djasé, name of a palisade composed of large mats. Children born at the time of the sacrifices to the Nama, who are dedicated to the fetish, are frequently given the name

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> sees everything. The old men explain this to you with an intensity that proves their good faith, and children recite the sayings of the old men with a frankness so naive that one cannot misunderstand it.

a Being endowed with reason and all powerful. The term is the translation of the word sa.

It is apparent that in the beginning the word Alla in no way meant a Being or an Individual; it simply expressed a concept, an idea already known, accepted and translated by the word sa, and the Bambara simply adopted a foreign word corresponding to their own concept.

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If to the Bambara the word Alla had meant the Divinity Himself, the Supreme Being, would they ever have dared to speak it, to make it their own? I cannot bring myself to believe that they would, among them the name of a powerful person, a religious chief, or venerated being is never spoken in vain or in an unsuitable manner. If some of their kings, among them /79/ N'golo, not to mention others, punished anyone caught speaking his /the royal/ name by fines and prison, cast them into slavery, and even beheaded them as guilty of the crime of lese majesty, what would they not have to fear from the Creator if they spoke His name in vain and inappropriately! Furthermore, it is a widespread custom to avoid speaking the name of one who is feared or venerated.

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No well-bred and self-respecting woman ever speaks the name of her husband. She speaks of him as né tigi ("my master"), so tigi ("the master of the house"). Most frequently she adorns him with a borrowed name, a bougna toua, or name of respect, and a polygamist has several such names, each wife giving him one of her own invention.

In well-brought-up families -- and most of them are (1) -- the

> 1. Our Bambara Negroes have great respect for the members of their families and are considerate of them;

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Djasé instead of Nama or Namakoro. The Nama is sometimes surrounded by a wall instead of mats. This is extremely unusual, and I have seen only one sanctuary of this kind, at Dougoutigila in the Bani /region/.

of the Komo is of iron, so one says: "An bi négé son, we are sacrificing to the iron." A fetish can give health in the sense that it can refrain from causing sickness if it is a gnâ, or it can actually give health and well-being if it is a gnéna; thus the expression used most frequently is: "An ta foura bi son, we are sacrificing to our cure," or again: "An ta foura bi djigi so, our cure is paying us the honor of a visit."

776 Are we here dealing with a recent custom, which dates from the arrival of the Moslem? I cannot accept this idea, for all the evidence indicates that it antedates presence, I believe without hesitation that the name of the Divinity or Supreme Being was never spoken by the Bambara, that they were not permitted to pronounce it. It is not surprising, then, that the name should gradually have been lost, erased from their memories so that it is unknown at present.

Moreover, since the Bambara God was without priest, altar, or sacrifice, was there any need to speak His name? According to their ideas, the gnéna or djiné are beings intermediate between men and angels, put in charge of the elements by the Divinity and delegated by Him to distribute His favors and His punishments to human beings; would it then be foolish and presumptuous to believe that since the beginning he only addressed God through the mediation of the gnéna or djiné? I cannot doubt that the Bambara implored the djiné to present their homage and worship to their Lord, the Lord of the whole universe, to their Tigi ani fen bé tigi yé, as the sorcerers always say in their liturgical ceremonies. The latter are the watchful guardians of the ancient formulas and customs; that is the source of all their prestige.

Moreover, the worship of the gnéna, or djiné, antedates that of the gnâ (boli or sétané). It has no history; its origin is lost in the darkness of the ages, and in this fact I see a new reason to believe that they were the first intermediaries between man and God.

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551 Children dedicated to the Nia: Nia-gné foula, Nia-n-ti, Nia-n-nkoro, Nia.

Children dedicated to the Kono: Niélé, Tjétjélé, Djonké (2).

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2. Djonke, a respectful appellation often applied to the master of the Kono. Tjétjélé, the password of the initiates of the Kono and its family name, or diamou. When a stranger appears at the sacrifice, he is asked the question: "E b'a la wa Wélema djonké? Are you of the sect of Wélema djonké?" Only a brother can answer: "Tjétjélé, ne b'a la. Tjétjélé, I am."

Children dedicated to the Magna: Ma-n-djé, Magna, Magné.
Children dedicated to the Djo: Djo, Djokoro, Djomené.
Children dedicated to the Douga: Dougakoro, Douga-n-tjé.
Children dedicated to the Da: Dakoro, Da-n-son, Da-n-wélé.
Children dedicated to the Bala: Bala, Balake, Mousa and Misa (3).

3. Mousa and Misa are synonyms of Bala and not a translation of the name Moses.

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572 It is also on a powerful boli, or rather in its presence, that the Bambara swear to an indissoluble friendship, a friendship so close that it finds the two persons and their children like a kinship tie. This is the sinnakoun! No Negro has ever been able to talk to me about it with any clarity or precision, so that I am unable to give it a very exact definition. Basing my interpretation on the custom -- widespread among the Bambara -- of a woman showing her breast in order to indicate clearly that she is the mother of a child (a wolo ba, "his

521 831 one's eyes, the answer is almost always: "A flé bani, mousoni do, ne na d'ima, ka ké i soungourou yé. But look here, this is a girl; I will give her to you, she will be your soungourou."

521 831 576 836 And all this carelessness from the moral standpoint should not surprise us in a country where a crowd of young men greet each other even in the presence of their mothers: "I sounna ko? About the affair of your sleep? And your lovemaking at night?" "I soungourou ka kendé? How is your soungourou?"

And where young girls do not blush to say to young men: "Do me the favor that I am asking you."

"Ne na ko doumani fo i ye.

I will tell you of a sweet affair (or: conversation, shameful embraces).

"Né na ne ko doumani d'i ma.

I will give you my sweet affair (or: I give myself to you).

In short, every Bambara who awards himself the prize of virtue, avoids saying that he has respected foreign women and girls temporarily under his roof. The statement would be received with a shrug of the shoulders and a smile. He merely says: "I have respected the women and girls of the village," and he does not shout this very loud nor before everybody.

2. Concerning Adultery and Fornication

684 Adultery is a crime in the eyes of every Negro, and the guilty one caught in the act is brought before the council of elders and severely punished. I must state, however, that although adultery seems a serious offence to all, the crime does not lie in the satisfaction obtained. There has been a lack of fairness, the rights of a third party have been violated, and in this lies all the wrongdoing.

Caught in the act, red handed, the guilty party makes a friendly deal with the husband, who rarely asks him for more than 16,000 cowrie shells (from 15 to 20 francs) and the material for a sacrifice to the family boli, comprising perhaps two hens, a goat, two kola nuts, and between 5 to 800 cowrie shells for the sacrificer's bonus.

564 erroneous, for the Bambara despises this breed and would never entrust one with such a delicate mission. The Bambara dreads the storyteller in his private festivals. How many times they say as they invite us: "We came ourselves to invite you so that the news may not reach the ears of the storytellers." The to-n-tigi, head of the association of the fla-n-to, plays no important role in the marriage of a to-n-dé, or member. The to-n-déou, members of the association of the fla-n-to, are invited and enjoy themselves at the wedding of a fellow te-n-de, and that is all. Mr. Barbier Louis /sic/ makes a mistake; see page 527, Dec. 16, 1907, of the review La Quinzaine.

584 latter receives four kola nuts wrapped in green leaves and tied again and again so that they will not wither, and, spear in hand and his inseparable goatskin, or foroko, well fastened to his shoulder, he starts on his way, proud to be assigned such a pleasant mission and happy and pleased to be the fourouboloma tigi, guardian of the wedding gifts (2).

2. Fourouboloma, "engagement gift"; tigi, "master."

584 887 576 At the end of his journey, on the public square, he extends a very friendly greeting to the old men who there devote themselves to laziness in the shade of a great tree with the apathy of lizards; he gives them all generously of the snuff that every stranger must offer, and if he has no friend or acquaintance in the village, he chooses from among them a man of good will who will introduce him to the family and smooth the way for him. When this man is found, he goes